

Halo Defection

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Summary: What will happen when a Covenant frigate defects to the UNSC? How will the war change? How will the Covenant change? How will the Sanghelli change? Read and Review please I own nothing.

1. Dissent

A/N: Before I start this story I want to extend my thanks to 'Just-a-crazy-man' and 'edboy4296' for their name suggestions. Some of you might recognize the sparring match from a Star Trek Deep Space Nine Episode, where Commander Worf fights Jem'Hadar in a similar situation.

Chapter 1

We've been fighting the Humans for fifteen cycles. Wherever we go they are there and we are told to exterminate them. But...after fifteen cycles...they continue to fight. Why? Any other race would have given up by now. In the early days of the war there were reports of humans surrendering but they were killed anyway. Once the Humans figured out that there was no surrendering they fight that much harder. I have seen with my own eyes acts of great courage and valor. I have even seen...children no taller than my own fight back. But five years ago is when my faith in the covenant and the great journey began to waver...

-Ry Nomiee

* * *

><p>Five years ago._

SSGT. Jeremy Scott fumed. His entire squad of marines had been killed but he survived and fought a single elite minor hand to hand...for five minutes. The covenant trooper seemed impressed and decided to capture him and later execute him for sport. The SSGT. had been forced to fight hand-to-hand in several bouts. Mainly with Grunts and Jackals which he beat fairly easily. This time however he was

fighting another minor elite who had pushed him to the ground. Scott got up and palmed a short pole on the edge of the ring. There were at least four such poles, hitting them with the palm signified that you were still in the match. He got back into a fighting position and waited for his opponent's next move. Behind the minor elite he saw a gold-armored elite, the color of a ship, fleet or fieldmaster. He saw the minor's stance change slightly but he knew the elite was about to kick with his right leg. The marine jumped back, then tackled the elite to the ground. He hit the minor in the face with a quick one-two combo but was quickly knocked off. He held his balance and waited for the elite to get up.

The minor quickly got to his feet and palmed a nearby pole. The SSGT threw a roundhouse kick toward the elite's chest, which surprisingly connected. Sensing a weakened opponent the marine drew closer, knowing he couldn't match the elite in a contest of strength. He changed his fighting style to boxing, bobbing and weaving around the elite's punches and swings. Finally a left hook knocked some teeth out of the elite's mouth and left it dazed. Scott with one final snap-kick forced the elite out of the ring, disqualifying him. The SSGT looked at the gold elite. "Is that the best you have?" he asked

The elite grinned, "He was the youngest and least experienced. I will seek another opponent that will provide more of a challenge." he said, then stomped away. The marine was led to his holding cell. Where he fell asleep on the cold hard floor.

* * *

><p>In the hall leading away from the sparring ring, a Major domo elite joined the shipmaster who happened to be an old friend. "The human fought well." he said quietly.<p>

"That he did, there aren't many of his species who can match an elite in a sparring match. Come to think of it, there aren't many of any species save the Brutes who can match an elite." the shipmaster replied.

The two elite reached a small office where they could talk in private. "Shipmaster...you know my faith is the strongest of any, but I must wonder why we continue to eliminate the humans. If the prophets didn't demand their extinction they might make a worthy addition to the covenant. Their combat prowess is only limited by their technology."

"I must confess I have those same doubts. And I do agree, if the humans possessed only shielding technology for their ships, they could conceivably defeat us in space as well as on the ground. The tide could turn quite fast."

A moment of silence passed as the two officer contemplated that possibility. Then the Major spoke up. "Who will fight the human tomorrow?" he asked

"I told the human I would find him a worthy opponent. I will fight the human. A true test of his courage."

* * *

><p>The next day, the SSGT was quickly and rudely awakened and taken to the ring. He was shoved into the middle of the ring and told to wait. He simply shrugged and began stretching. When he finished he stood and waited some more then the gold armored elite made his way through the crowd. "So, do you have an actual challenge for me today or am I beating up on the youngsters again?" asked Scott.<p>

The elite held his face impassively. "I have found your opponent. Prepare yourself."

"Where is he?" asked Scott.

The shipmaster stepped into the ring much to the surprise of the crowd. "You are looking at him."

The SSGT grinned. But it was not a grin of an easy victory, it was a grin that said 'finally a real challenge'. He and the elite palmed the short poles closest to them, then assumed fighting stances. The SSGT went down first, victim of a right hook. But the marine quickly collected himself, palmed a pole and resumed his fighting stance. The shipmaster was hit with a fast one-two combo, then Scott spun with a back-kick, knocking the shipmaster to the ground. The crowd gasped. The shipmaster grinned, nodded and palmed the pole.

The fight went on for ten minutes, both fighters landing and blocking blows but finally, with blood streaming down his face, the SSGT crawled toward a pole intent on getting up. Then the shipmaster surprised everyone. He put a hand on the human's shoulder. "You fought well human. Enough." he pulled the human to his feet. "What is your name?" he asked to the even bigger shock of the crowd. In Sangheili culture names implied legitimacy and only Elites deserved names.

The human took some deep breaths and spoke. "My name...is Staff Sergeant Jeremy Scott. UNSC Marines Corps, Orbital Drop Shock Trooper 2nd Division, 3rd Battalion, Alpha Company, 2nd Platoon."

* * *

><p>Present day_

Ry Noimee and Baras 'Jhanakee sat in the shipmaster's quarters on the covenant frigate Unwavering Faith. "You can't be serious...defect? To the humans?" asked Noimee.

"I know it sounds like we're betraying our people. But I believe that the Sangheili are being lied to especially when it comes to the humans. The prophets continue to tell us they will run and cower before us, yet they do not and that they are weak and verminous. But I have seen humans with great strength...and I'm not talking about the demons either. I'm talking about normal humans." replied Jhanakee the shipmaster.

"How do you propose we contact the humans without them blasting a hole in our ship first?" asked Noimee.

"I believe I have something...or rather someone who would be willing to help us in that regard..." replied the shipmaster.

2. Defection

Chapter 2

2542 (UNSC Military Calendar)

Defection

The shipmaster walked into the brig of his small frigate. He relieved the guards and disabled the video feeds. He approached the sole occupant of the farthest cell. "Stand up." he said

The occupant of the cell stood and approached. Staff Sergeant Jeremy Scott looked ragged from the five years of imprisonment on this frigate. "What do you want?"

"I am making arrangements to defect to the UNSC. I wish to know how to contact them." said the shipmaster.

The Marine looked at the shipmaster. "You're joking right?"

The shipmaster stood resolute. "I am serious. I wish to know how to contact the humans without being blown out of space first."

Despite the differences, the Marine could tell via body language, the way the Elite stood, with its arms crossed, that it was serious. "You are serious."

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Why what?"

"Why defect to the humans, you'll be betraying your people."

"I do not believe we can defeat the humans. All we can do is exterminate them. That is not an honorable victory."

The marine thought for a moment, then spoke. "The first thing you need to do is find a human colony that the Covenant are aware of but haven't attacked yet."

"Why can't you just give me coordinates to a colony?"

The Marine shook his head. "The Cole Protocol prevents me from doing so. The Protocol also states that a captured Covenant ship can't be taken to a colony or military installation without an exhaustive search for tracking devices. It also commands that if any covenant ships are detected that all ships are to erase their navigational databases to prevent it from falling into enemy hands."

"A wise precaution. It seems to be the main reason why this war is lasting so long. We usually stumble onto human colonies unprepared. I will search the databank and find a suitable world." replied the shipmaster.

"When you get to the system. It will help to have me on the line to convince the Fleet that your offer is genuine."

"How will they know you're not being coerced?"

The Marine hesitated. "We have code phrases that we are trained to use to alert authorities that a person is under duress. We also have codes that the fleet with authenticate to confirm that it is me on the line."

The shipmaster nodded again in approval of the humans ingenuity. "I will return with a suitable world to go to."

"You might want to speak with the crew as well, they may not take kindly to you defecting." said the Marine

"I trained these Elites personally. They are loyal to me but their faith in the Covenant also wavers. I do not believe I will have trouble." replied the shipmaster, then walked out.

* * *

><p>An hour later, the Shipmaster spoke to the crew. "For those of you who wish to remain with the Covenant I will allow you to board a slipspace capable shuttle and return. Those that wish to stay aboard, take one step forward."<p>

The relatively small crew, arrayed in the frigate's tiny hanger, stepped forward as one. A Major Domo Elite took one step further and spoke. "We are with you shipmaster. It is time for the Sangheili to come out from under the yolk of the Prophets. We have served them long enough."

The Shipmaster beamed with pride in his crew. "Speak of this to no one. No transmissions at all."

* * *

><p>Three days later, the Covenant Frigate Unwavering Faith dropped out of slipspace on the edge of a human-controlled system. It was called Emerald Cove. Once the site of a top-secret SPARTAN training mission, it held relatively little value and only had a small token defense fleet.

The commander of the Human fleet was Captain Jonathan Wells. His force consisted of the two Destroyers _Gene Roddenberry_ and _HG Wells_. Along with three frigates and two smaller corvettes. Captain Wells sat in the Captain's chair of the _Roddenberry_ and sighed. Fifteen years of constant combat had wearied him but also made him stronger. He had no family to go back to. His family had been on one of the first planets to be attacked after Harvest so he had no qualms about taking a Covenant ship with him if he went down.

He was reviewing yet another performance report from the last battle drill. The crews marks were good but he knew they could be better. Then a console pinged for the attention of the sensor officer Lt. Scottsdale. "Oh no...Sir? Slipspace signature detected. It appears to be a single mass, pretty small, possibly Covenant. Based on computer estimates I'd say a single ship no bigger than a frigate. ETA approx five minutes."

The Captain was instantly alert "Go to Red Alert, warm all weapons and contact the fleet, assume attack formation Charlie. See if the

planet can get us some fighter support ready."

The crew sprang into action as they prepared to engage the Covenant.

* * *

><p>Five minutes later the Unwavering Faith dropped out of slipspace well out of orbit of the colony and approached cautiously. The next event to occur shocked Captain Wells.

"Sir...we're being hailed." said an Ensign at the Comm. station.

"By who?" asked the Captain

"The Covenant ship sir."

"Come again?"

"The Covenant ship is hailing us sir. On a standard channel."

The Captain hesitated then nodded. "Put it through."

The Captain had fully expected an Elite to appear on the communications channel. Instead the face of a war-torn Marine appeared.

"_Captain, I am Staff Sergeant Jeremy Scott. Authentication code One-Five-Seven-Two-Juliet-Sierra-Eight-Three."_ the Marine said simply.

The Captain's jaw dropped. He pointed to the Ensign at communications, "Authenticate that code! I want to make sure it's him." He turned back to the screen. "Staff Sergeant...what's going on? You know you're violating the Cole Protocol by bringing that ship here."

"_If you'll allow me Captain I can explain...This ship wasn't captured by our forces. I've been a prisoner for five years. The shipmaster as well as the crew...wish to defect."_ he said as he stepped aside and allowed a gold armored Elite to fill the screen.

"_What this Marine says is true. My crew and I wish to defect. We believe the prophets are deceiving us. Furthermore, my crew and I have seen as well as several other Sangheili, the innate bravery and courage of Humans. We do not believe they can be defeated because you keep fighting even in the face of such heavy odds."_

The Ensign at the comm station whispered into the Captain's ear "Sir, the code is authentic."

"I see...please put Staff Sergeant Scott back on."

"_I'm here Captain."_

"You weren't joking when you said they wanted to defect. This could change the course of the war. However I must point out that you did violate the Cole Protocol in bringing this ship here."

"_Indeed it could Captain. And I haven't violated the Cole Protocol...the Covenant already know about this Colony. According to the last communications received before we went into a comm blackout was a timetable. In about a week, you're going to have a CCS-class battlecruiser and two Covenant destroyers in the system. I suggest you either evac the colony as quickly as possible or get a buttload of ships out here."_

"Since they already know I guess its not a violation is it? I'll contact HighCom and request instructions. In the meantime I'd like to send a boarding party over."

The Marine nodded "_The shipmaster was expecting you to do so eventually._ _Unwavering Faith _out."

* * *

><p>Ten minutes later a Pelican full of Marines and three ONI agents landed in the small hangar bay of the Unwavering Faith. A single crimson-colored Elite stood in the bay. "Welcome aboard the Frigate _Unwavering Faith_."

The lead ONI agent stepped forward. "Lower your weapons Marines. These are defectors...I am Commander David Sloan. Office of Naval Intelligence."

"The shipmaster is expecting you. Please follow me." said the Major Domo

The agent nodded then said to his Marine commander. "Gunney, leave a squad with the Pelican. The rest of you come with me."

3. Discussions

_A/N: To address Spartan1117's questions: 1. Updates will be as consistent as humanly possible. 2. The first few chapters will focus on the defection and the reaction on both sides. But will eventually focus on various battles as the UNSC integrates the newly acquired technology. 3. Chapter length will vary depending on what I'm writing. I will try to add more detail and character development as time passes, hopefully this will translate to longer well-written chapters. BTW the ships mentioned at the end are not quite the same, they have different crews and Captains. The cruiser had yet to be refitted for the special mission mentioned in the Fall of Reach which in the original timeline is still a ways off. __Remember this story takes place about fifteen years into the Human-Covenant war. The Battle of Reach happens twenty-five years into the war.__

Chapter 3

Discussions

Commander Sloan was lead by the Major Domo Elite to the bridge of the Unwavering Faith. In the center stood another Elite in gold armor and next to him was SSGT Jeremy Scott, dressed in old ODST armor.

"Commander Sloan, this is shipmaster Baras 'Jhanakee." said SSGT Scott.

The Commander gave a slight bow of respect. "Shipmaster, I understand you and your crew wish to defect."

"Correct. In addition I must ask for political asylum."

"Why?"

"Once the Covenant realize my crew and I have defected, they will no doubt seek us out."

"I see...You realize of course that many people will be suspicious of your motives."

"Yes I know. The Staff Sergeant has explained this to me. As a gesture of good faith, I return him to you as well as an additional gift."

"And what would that be?" asked Sloan

"Before we set out on our last cruise as a covenant ship we were tasked to deliver several spare parts used in the construction and maintenance of shield generators and plasma torpedo launchers." said the shipmaster.

Sloan's jaw dropped. _Shields...and plasma weapons..._

"I...we...thank you. You may have just given us the chance we need to survive."

"With your permission we will transfer those parts aboard the ships stationed here with instructions on how to mount them. We have enough parts for shields for all the ships here. But only enough parts to mount a single plasma torpedo on your heaviest ship."

"Of course. I will speak with my superiors. For now consider your asylum request under consideration."

"Thank you. Major Ry Noimee will escort you to the cargo bay where you can effect the transfer of the components. I also have several skilled technicians among my crew who can assist with integrating the technology onto your ships."

"Very well. And again, thank you."

* * *

><p>It took thirty minutes to effect the transfer of the parts to the seven ships assigned to the system. The engineers onboard the ships were confident they could get the shields working by the time the Covenant arrived in the system.<p>

Commander Sloan sat in his office on the plant's surface. ONI's best minds were hard at work analysing the components and schematics to see if humans could create the technology on their own. A ping on his desk interrupted his thoughts.

"Yes?" he asked

"Sir, it's ONI Headquarters on Reach." said his secretary.

"Put them through."

The screen on his desk raised up and he scrolled through a few screens of confidentiality clauses, routine stuff for an ONI agent, then the three highest ranking members of ONI of Reach appeared on his screen.

"Commander Sloan, is this a joke? A covenant ship appeared in system, communicated with the fleet and asked to defect?" said the center officer

"No sir, it is not. I've been aboard the ship and spoken with the shipmaster. In addition to his defection he asked for political asylum and as a gesture of good faith released an ODS that had been in captivity for five years as well as schematics and spare parts for capital-ship grade shields and a single plasma torpedo launcher. We have the components and are installing them in the ships now." Sloan replied

"I see. Why did he defect?"

"He believes his people are being deceived by the Prophets. He said that some Elites are impressed with Humans on the battlefield. That they've seen great acts of courage and valor, something which they appreciate." said Sloan

"Indeed. You said he requested political asylum?"

"Yes he believes that the Covenant will try to kill him and his crew when they find out. I told him to consider the matter under review."

"Considering what he gave us I think political asylum is the least we can grant. However there will be many who will want to prosecute him for war crimes. I must ask, did he participate in any actions against human civilians."

"I didn't ask but I get the impression that he is more of a naval officer who rarely goes to ground. I can find out though."

"Please do. In the meantime our scientist are analysing the schematics and parts you sent us. This defection may have changed the face of the war."

* * *

><p>Commander Sloan met with the shipmaster two days later. The shield generators had been installed on every ship and were being tested and the ship AIs were getting used to the power requirements. He walked up to the shipmaster as the Elite monitored the bridge activities.<p>

"Shipmaster I have several more questions to ask on behalf of my superiors.." Sloan said

"Of course." the Elite said turning to the Commander

"First of all, there are many who would wish to prosecute you and your species for war crimes committed against human civilians. I must

ask if you participated in any such actions."

The Elite stared for a few seconds then responded. "Not directly. Though I was present for several such actions. I expressed my concerns over these actions but they fell on deaf ears. I did my best to avoid such actions. If I had outright protested those orders I would have been branded a heretic and would not be here today."

"When did you start considering defection?" asked Sloan

"It would have been five of your years ago. When SSGT Scott was captured by a Minor Elite. We brought him to a prison and kept him alive because he kept fighting. He was forced to spare with many Covenant troops but it wasn't until he spared with and beat the Minor who captured him that I began to doubt my faith. The next day I faced him. We both fought hard but in the end he could barely stand much less fight. I ended it because I saw that he would not give up, no matter how badly injured he would not give up. Nor I believe would the rest of his species."

Sloan nodded. "We know the Covenant's motivations are religious. But why did the Prophets order humanity to be wiped out?" asked Sloan

"The Prophets and the rest of the Covenant believe that Humans are an affront to the gods. Our gods are known as the Forerunners. We believe the Forerunners were beings of incredible power. More than likely they were an advanced civilization. Our main beliefs center around a 'Great Journey'. We believe the Forerunners embarked on that journey and left their creations behind for us to follow them." replied the Elite

"I see...and you believe the Covenant, specifically the Elites are being deceived by the Prophets."

"Yes."

"Very well."

"Have you spoken with your superiors about political asylum?" asked the shipmaster.

"I have and they are considering it. In the meantime I have a plan which should keep the Covenant off your back." said Sloan

* * *

><p>Three days after that ONI Commanders at Reach approved the asylum request and granted approval for Commander Sloan's plan. The shields aboard the seven ships in the system were repeatedly tested and optimized by the AIs. The flagship of the defense fleet, the UNSC Destroyer Gene Roddenberry had a single plasma torpedo launcher mounted on the dorsal surface. The ship's AI, Kirk conducted several test firings and a dozen actual firings against an asteroid. The result was spectacular. He even improved the guidance programs and with input from the other ship AIs, turned the torpedo launcher into a beam weapon. He also proposed a new type of MAC round and a new warhead for the Archer-class missile..<p>

"Intriguing Kirk. So this new MAC round you're talking about is essentially a hollow-point round filled with plasma?"

"Yes. It should come as a nasty surprise to the Covenant."

"No kidding. Adding plasma to Archer missiles should also improved their effectiveness greatly. Now that we posses shielding seven of our ships should be more than enough to handle three Covenant ships." replied Captain Wells.

They had just finished some diagnostics on the shields and weapons when the sensors registered incoming contacts.

The AI Kirk who's avatar was that of a fictional starship captain, quickly analysed the sensor data. "Sir, I have inbound slipspace contacts. Mass shadow suggests two to five warships of Covenant design. It could be the fleet assigned to destroy this colony."

"Our intelligence says it's supposed to be a CCS-class battlecruiser and two destroyers."

"Just a moment, applying sensor records of relevant ship designs...I have a match captain, within %80 accuracy the incoming ships are indeed a CCS-class battlecruiser and two Covenant Destroyers. Wait a moment, slipspace ruptures detected in orbit. IFF shows they're friendlies."

"Specifically?" asked Captain Wells.

"An old Halcyon-class cruiser and two more frigates. Ships are identified as the UNSC _Pillar of Autumn_, _In Amber Clad_ and _Forward Unto Dawn._"

4. Battle of Emerald Cove

A/N: I went back and changed _In Amber Clad_ and _Forward unto Dawn_ from destroyers to heavy frigates. I'll also be including ship names from other franchises as well, keep an eye out for them.

Chapter 4

Battle of Emerald Cove

Captain Wells was strapped into the command chair of his destroyer the UNSC _Gene Roddenberry_. The destroyer _H.G. Wells_, three light frigates, two corvettes as well as the heavy frigates _In Amber Clad_ and _Forward unto Dawn_, took up position around the cruiser _Pillar of Autumn._

"All ships report!" ordered Wells, even though he was on a destroyer rather than a cruiser he retained operational command of the fleet.

The Lt. manning communications spoke up. "All ships in position sir. Fighters launched."

"Very well. Task the corvettes and two light frigates for point defense duty. Kirk, plot MAC gun trajectories and split them among the fleet. Time the shots to hit with a barrage of the new plasma

missiles. Keep the shields down until I say so. I want them to think we still don't have shields."

"Yes sir." said Kirk. Even as he acknowledged the order mathematical symbols and numbers scrolled across his fictional Starfleet uniform. "MAC gun trajectories calculated, powering MAC cannons across the fleet. We'll be ready to fire in five minutes."

"Status on the Covenant fleet?" asked Wells

"Holding position sir. They might be requesting reinforcements. Ten against three is a little heavy sir. Especially considering one of our ships is a cruiser. Albeit an old one but still." Kirk replied

The three Covenant ships began to approach, slowly at first, then they sped up. "Adjusting MAC vectors..." said Kirk

The Covenant ships had just gotten into effective weapons range when Kirk spoke up. "Sir, MAC guns are charged and ready."

"Fire!"

Eight MAC rounds of various sizes flashed across space. At the same time three plasma torpedoes launched from the Covenant ships. All eight MAC rounds hit their targets. A heavy round from the cruiser and two more medium rounds from the heavy frigates knocked down the CCS cruiser's shields. Lighter rounds hit the two destroyers but failed to penetrate the shields. A barrage of plasma-based Archer missiles also hit, tearing deep holes in the enemy cruiser.

As the enemy ships were hit, the Covenant plasma torpedoes closed in.

"Torpedo range six thousand kilometers...five thousand...four...three...two." Kirk counted

"Raise shields!" yelled Wells.

The seven original ships raised their new shields and the plasma torpedoes hit. Two torpedoes hit two of the light frigates, their shields weakened but held. The crews felt a slight shudder but no other damage. The last torpedo impacted the _Gene Roddenberry_.

"Report." said Wells.

"Sir, shields down to %90. These shields are quite impressive." replied Kirk.

On all ten ships, the crews cheered because they finally had a chance to win this war.

* * *

><p>On the Covenant cruiser, the shipmaster picked himself up off the deck then yelled for a report. A Sangheili Major reported back. "Shipmaster! Shields are depleted, we have hull breaches on decks three, four and five, all forward sections." he said<p>

"Status on the enemy...Report!"

"Sir...all three targeted ships are still there!"

"Impossible!" replied the shipmaster

"I'm reading energy shields on seven of the ten ships. They must have recently acquired the technology otherwise every ship would have them." replied the Major

"Request reinforcements and inform the Council that the Humans now possess shielding for their ships." said the shipmaster.

"Yes shipmaster...Shipmaster! slipspace rupture...a Covenant frigate? Computer identifies it as the _Unwavering faith._"

"There is no way the Council could have responded so fast. Open a channel to that ship."

The communications screen turned on and the shipmaster stepped in front of it. "Unwavering Faith, this is the Cruiser _Victory_, where are the rest of the reinforcements-" he was cut off as a wearied Sangheili came to the screen. "Humans..." he coughed out. "taken the ship... I can't self-destruct. No warriors left."

The shipmaster was shocked. "Get boarding craft ready to dock with the Unwavering Faith. That ship is about to be taken by Humans."

On the screen the other shipmaster howled, then fell in a spatter of blood. A Marine walked up to the communications screen and having heard the order for boarding craft spoke up. "Correction, this vessel is now the UNSC Unwavering Faith. Sayonara Covie filth!" said the Marine

Another Major spoke up. "Sir, the Unwavering Faith is charging weapons and targeting us!"

"Noooooooo!" yelled the shipmaster as a single plasma torpedo penetrated the aft hull plating and damaged the reactor making it go critical.

Four more MAC rounds flashed across space and split the remaining two Covenant destroyers in half. Ten UNSC ships moved in to salvage the remains.

* * *

><p>SSGT Jeremy Scott offered a hand to shipmaster Janakee. "Nice work. You might get an Emmy Award for that performance."<p>

"Emmy Award?"

"It's an award for good actors and actresses. Do you Sangheili have anything like theater or drama?"

"Not really."

"Remind me to show you some of our old TV shows and movies some time. You might appreciate some of them."

"Indeed."

* * *

><p>Commander David Sloan sat back in his chair. The Battle of Emerald Cove was over and Humanity had won. His comm system pinged it was ONI Reach. He punched in an authorization code and the face of Senior Admiral Whitcomb appeared on the screen. "Commander Sloan. Report."<p>

"Sir, we've repelled the Covenant attack to Emerald Cove. The Covenant lost three ships. Our new shields held against their plasma torpedoes. I also have reason to believe that the Covenant believe that shipmaster Janakee was killed during a boarding party attack on his ship. It was broadcast over every Covenant channel."

"Excellent. Our scientist have examined the shield generators and we're in normal production We'll be able to start refitting the majority of the fleet in a few weeks. Our priorities will be the cruisers, and carriers, since they will have stronger shields. The plasma torpedo launchers are a bit more difficult to manufacture but we should have them in normal production in about a week. In the meantime send the Unwavering Faith to these coordinates. We'll conduct a thorough search for tracking devices, then take the ship to Reach. We'll hold the crew in a secure facility, then figure out what to do with them."

"Shipmaster Janakee has suggested that instead of broadcasting propaga against the Prophets into Covenant space, broadcast stories and tales of heroism and courage. Something the Elites appreciate. We can also transmit stories of Sangheili courage as well. They will realize that they have more in common with Humans than the Prophets will admit. We're hoping that it will either result in more defections or the Elites will rise up themselves."

"That's a good idea. Get started on it."

"Yes sir."

5. Reaction

Chapter 5

Reaction

Lord Terrence Hood walked into the President's office and stood before him.

"What is it?"

"Mr. President, a Covenant ship has defected to the UNSC. It was crewed by Elites who felt the prophets were lying to them. As a gesture of good faith, they released a POW who'd been in captivity for five years. They also gave us several spare parts to use in construction capital-ship grade shield generators and at least one plasma weapon. The Covenant then attack the colony on Emerald Cove. Our fleet survived the attack and destroyed the Covenant fleet."

"Casualties?"

"We had ten ships, Mr. President, they had three. Under normal circumstances we would have lost most of them, but we managed to install shields on seven of the ships prior to the Covenant attack" Hood smiled "Sir, we didn't lose any ships. Several AIs have proposed new weapon designs that could be easily implemented across the fleet."

The President was stunned to say the least. "That's fantastic! And the ship that defected?"

"We've taken the ship to a remote sector of space to conduct a search for tracking devices as per the Cole Protocol. We even managed to make the Covenant think we took the ship by force instead of defection. In addition to the shields and weapons we've also gained enhanced sensors and we're developing artificial gravity. The enhanced sensors can improve our slipspace velocity by as much as 15%. If we can get our hands on an actual slipspace drive from the Covenant and use that to improve our own, our accuracy in slipspace jumps would go through the roof. Fleet actions would actually be feasible, we can even go on the offensive against the Covenant."

"Wow...that's...that's incredible..." said the President. "How long will it take to refit the fleet with shields at the very least?"

"We've converted several factories at Reach to producing the needed components and we're in the process of doing the same across the UNSC but it will be some time before we can mass produce them. We're focusing on refitting the cruisers, destroyers and carriers of the fleet. Once they've been refitted we can use them more often instead of saving them for Inner Colony defence. We can also begin building more cruisers as we only have a few dozen right now. We've reactivated some of the older classes as well especially the Halcyon-class cruiser they were the toughest ships we've designed even though their combat performance was poor. We're refitting them with modern reactors and weapons systems. We're also increasing production of AIs."

"Excellent work Terrence. We might just survive this war."

Fleet Master Thel Vadam was summoned to the Council chambers early in the morning. He had forwarded the report from the battle at the Human colony known as Emerald Cove. He was as surprised as everyone else when he learned that the Humans had captured a frigate and even more surprised when the fleet encountered Human ships with shields. Vadam knew it was a matter of time before the Humans got their hands on it but he still had to wonder how the Humans had taken a Covenant frigate. The transmission indicated that the shipmaster aboard could not activate the self-destruct sequence indicating that the Humans took engineering quickly then spread through the ship. The last few seconds of the transmission showed a Human Marine killing the shipmaster, then turning the frigate's weapons on the fleet.

Vadam walked into the Council chambers and bowed respectfully. "This meeting is called to order." said the Chief Councilor.

"Fleetmaster Vadam, do you actually believe that the Humans could

actually board a Covenant ship and take it from us?" asked the Chief Sangheili Councilor.

"The transmissions are indisputable. It's possible the ship was taken by an ambush. If so, the Humans are far more dangerous than the Prophets imply."

"Speak with care." said a Minor Prophet from the side. "The Prophets know the war will be long and at times hard. But we must keep the faith."

"Forgive me, I only wished to express my concerns over the Humans."

"Understandable and forgiven." said the Minor prophet.

"Yet his concerns are known, and have been repeated throughout the Fleet. And now we have these transmissions from Human space. We can't trace them, they're always transmitted from different coordinates all in deep space." replied another

"I have read some of the transmissions. They contain stories of valor and courage, some from ancient times others more recent. They also contain similar Sangheili stories. I believe they are trying to tell us that we have more in common with the Humans than we think."

"How could a Human have anything in common with Sangheili?" asked the minor prophet.

A Council member thought for a moment. "I think we should confirm these stories from the Humans. It may well be that we have something in common with our enemy."

"Such as?" asked the prophet.

Vadam smiled as he realized exactly what the humans were trying to tell them. "An appreciation for honor and courage. From the stories I would infer that the Humans have a vast warrior tradition. The reason we're winning is because of our technology. I believe if the Humans possessed technology equal to our own they would go on the offensive."

"We must prepare for the possibility of a human counter-attack." said a Council member. "Fleetmaster, take your ships and secure our border colonies and facilities."

"Yes Councilor."

On Earth in Orlando Florida, a woman was cleaning her kitchen after fixing lunch for her kids who were on summer break. Elizabeth Scott, the wife of Jeremy Scott sighed as she remembered her husband. It had been five years since the Marines told her he was MIA and presumed dead. _The Covenant don't take prisoners...at least not for very long._ One of them had said. She knew what had happened even before they had said those dreaded words _we regret to inform you..._ now she had moved on with her life. Her son and daughter were her entire world.

So it was with great curiosity that she answered the door when two Marine Staff Sergeants in dress uniforms knocked on her door.

"Mrs. Elizabeth Scott?"

"Yes?"

"We have new information regarding your husband." said the marine on the left

"What kind of information? You said he was presumed dead."

"Yes ma'am, it appears that we were...mistaken." he said

"Please come in." she said, opening the door for the two Marines.

They sat on the couch and then told her what happened.

"Ma'am, we now know that your husband we indeed taken prisoner by the Covenant."

"You found his body?"

"Not exactly. Mrs. Scott what I'm about to tell you won't be released for another few days. Your husband survived captivity for five years. He was released when a Covenant frigate appeared in the Emerald Cove system and defected to the UNSC."

"He's alive?" she asked

"Yes. He assisted in the preliminary negotiations with the defectors, then assisted ONI with a classified operation. Don't worry it wasn't actual combat. He's on his way to Reach first where he will be given a medical exam and a debriefing by ONI.. Then he will be given three months leave and allowed to come home. He will also be given all back pay and allowances."

Before she knew it she was crying tears of joy. "So I guess what you're trying to tell me is 'we are pleased to inform you...'"

The lead Marine smiled. "I was about to say that."

_Breaking News From the Front Lines in the War Against the Covenant. A force of Orbital Drop Shock Troops was successful in boarding and capturing a Covenant Frigate. We now have access to such technologies as Shield Generators, Plasma weapons as well as Artificial Gravity, Enhanced sensors, slipspace engines and reactor technology. The UNSC announced the capture less than an hour ago. UNSC officials also announced a new recruitment drive to bolster numbers in preparation for a possible counter-attack... _

6. Battle of Victoria

A/N: I wanted to get this chapter out so I can move on. I have a rough outline of the next several chapters. There will be a bit of a time jump after this. But I hope you enjoy it.

Chapter 6

Battle of Victoria

The Marathon-class cruiser, _UNSC Dominion_ arrived in the Victoria system two weeks after the defection of the Covenant frigate _Unwavering Faith_. It had recently undergone a refit and received shield generators and a single plasma torpedo launcher. It's squadron of Longsword fighters also received shields and plasma cannons in place of the normal 80 millimeter auto-cannons. Factories at Reach and Earth as well as several other minor military ports were producing shielding and weapons components as fast as they could. It takes about a week to refit a cruiser to include shields, longer for the new plasma weapons. A carrier could take up to three weeks to refit completely.

And we're out here...alone. _The only warship in the system. But unless the Covenant come in force we should be able to hold them off._ The Captain thought to himself.

Captain Gerald Walker sat in the command chair of the cruiser he commanded. When the ship wasn't on alert he ran a semi-loose ship...in terms of military protocol. The junior officers were free to speak to him and ask any questions. He even had normal conversations with them. But he had trained his crew well. When a slipspace signature was detected, he called the crew to yellow-alert. Niceties went out the door, and military protocol quickly found its way onto the bridge.

"Sir, slipspace rupture ahead...Two Covenant ships...no wait I've got a third ship outside the system. Looks like a cruiser, CCS-class." said the sensor officer

"Go to combat alert Alpha. All hands to battlestations." replied the Captain.

"Sir, Covenant ships approaching. Weapons range in two minutes." replied the weapons officer.

"Charge MAC gun and plasma torpedoes. Target Archer pods A through E and the MAC on the left-hand destroyer. Lock plasma torpedoes on the right destroyer. Prepare to fire."

"Aye sir, Archer pods armed, MAC gun charge at fifty percent and climbing. Plasma torpedo at twenty percent charge and climbing." replied the weapons officer

Those two minutes felt like a lifetime but they got into range and fired.

The Archer pods flashed and hundreds of missiles launched. As the missiles approached the first destroyer the _Dominion_ fired it's MAC cannon. The round impacted the forward shields of the destroyer but the shields remained intact. The Archer missiles impacted shortly after and drained the shields due to their plasma warheads. Enhanced sensors on the _Dominion_ could track the shield strength of the enemy ships. The first destroyer's shields were down to thirty percent. At the same time the _Dominion_ fired it's single plasma torpedo at the other destroyer.

Needless to say the Sangheili on the second destroyer were surprised when a plasma torpedo hit their ship, draining the shields by almost half.

But even before the firepower of the UNSC cruiser was brought to bear the two destroyers fired back. A pair of plasma torpedoes raced in towards the _Dominion._ "All power to forward shields!" the Captain cried.

Both plasma torpedoes impacted the shields of the cruiser. The Covenant were surprised by the fact that the cruiser not only possessed plasma torpedoes but also heavy shielding. The two destroyers quickly recharged their launchers and fired again but not before deploying several dozen dropships to the surface of Victoria Colony.

"Sir, I've got three dozen dropships headed for the surface. Trajectory puts them on the outskirts of the town."

"Alert the colony and have them deploy colonial guard forces on the outskirts. Advise them we will be sending down ODSTs to assist in their defence momentarily. SgtMaj. Stockholm, get your troops on the ground."

"_Yes sir, you heard him. Boys saddle up!_" the Maj. said over the comm

"Deploying troops in three...two...one...drop drop drop!" said the flight controller.

Over the comm the bridge crew heard the Maj. "_Troopers! We are lean and very very mean!_"

A company's worth of ODSTs dropped to the surface. They landed in the streets of the main city, then headed for the defense positions set up by the CDF troops. In the meantime Captain Walker ordered another salvo of Archer missiles, MAC rounds and plasma torpedoes. The Covenant destroyer's shields were drained almost completely. Another plasma torpedo impacted the lead Covenant ship and punched a hole in the side. Another salvo of Archer missiles hit and widened the hole to include the reactor which went critical and exploded.

The explosion from the first destroyer severely damaged the second, depleting it's shields completely. The _Dominion _fired another plasma torpedo and destroyed it. Then the Covenant cruiser that was waiting outside the system jumped in and deployed many more troops to the ground.

"Sir, estimated Covenant troops on the ground now outnumber our own. They'll need reinforcements soon." said the XO

"Sir, three slipspace ruptures behind us. Ships identified as UNSC frigates." said the sensor officer

"Coordinate with their weapons officers and charge the MAC cannon and the plasma launcher. Ready Archer missile pods P through T. I want the all the frigates and our remaining Archers hitting at the same time as the MAC rounds."

"Aye sir, Target locked MAC gun charge at fifty percent. All missiles prepared to fire. Firing MAC guns in thirty seconds." said the weapons officer.

Before the quartet of UNSC ships could fire the Covenant cruiser fired three plasma torpedoes. All three torpedoes impacted the shields of the Dominion and drained them to fifty percent. At the same time the UNSCs weapons fired. Hundreds of Archer missiles flashed through space followed quickly by four MAC rounds.

The Cruiser's point defense lasers opened up destroying a quarter of the missiles before they impacted but the rest got through and drained the shields. At the same time four MAC rounds hit the cruiser. The heavy round from the Dominion hit hard and drained the shields down to twenty percent. Two lighter rounds depleted the shields and two more torpedoes punched large holes in the side. Before the Covenant could recover however the Dominion fired a plasma torpedo. The torpedo impacted amidships, burning through tough Covenant armor plating.

"Sir, the Covenant ship is breaking up." said the sensor officer

"Good get me Maj. Stockholm." said the Captain

"_This is Stockholm._" came the voice over the comm.

"Report Maj." ordered the Captain

"_We've been hit hard sir, the Covenant managed to take the outskirts and surround the city. We need reinforcements._" he replied

"Understood, help is on the way. Commander, deploy marines to reinforce the ODSs. Use some from our security detail if you have to. See if the frigates have any additional troops they can deploy as well."

"Aye sir...Sir, those frigates are carrying two platoons of Marines one of which are ODSs. They are being deployed now."

"Very well." said the Captain.

* * *

><p>A dozen Pelican dropships deployed from the cruiser and three more from each frigate. They all headed to the surface and landed in the town square the Marines temporary HQ. While regular Marines weren't as well trained as ODSs Maj. Stockholm welcomed the help.<p>

"Gunney, get your troops to the south end of the city. The Covenant are trying to push in on us. Lt. Dotson take your troops to the vehicle depot, there are a dozen warthogs we can use. I want you to continuously circle the city, provide support to any troops you encounter."

"Yes sir." came the quick reply and the two men gathered their troops.

"Sir! Covenant troops advancing from the north." said a 1st Lt. monitoring communications

"Contact the Dominion again, tell them we need some air support."

replied the Major.

"Yes sir."

* * *

><p>Sgt. Burns took cover from the hundreds of grunts coming his way. He reloaded as needler and plasma pistol rounds impacted the stone in front of him. Then popped back out and held down the trigger of his MA5B assault rifle. Sixty rounds of 7.62 millimeter full metal jacketed rounds flashed out in less than fifteen seconds. He sprayed it around and hit several grunts many of which fell to the ground. He fell back into cover and reloaded again with incendiary rounds. This time he leaned out of cover and took several careful shots, aiming for the Grunts methane tanks. Several caught fire and exploded with the force of a grenade taking out many more. Other marines returned fire as well but their fire paled in comparison with the hundreds of weapons pointed their direction.<p>

Burns tapped the side of his helmet to open the radio channel. "This is Sgt. Burns on the west side of Victoria city. The Covenant are overwhelming us, we have to fall back."

Almost immediately the reply came. "_Sgt. Burns, this is Major Stockholm. Hold your position. Help is on the way._"

"Understood sir. Burns out." Then to the rest of his troops he yelled "Hold this position!"

A chorus of 'yes sergeant!' went out. As one the marines renewed their fire and threw grenades. A moment later a private told him. "Sir, we're all out of grenades we have to fall back now!"

"Negative! we have support on the way and we _will_ hold this position!"

As the marines continued firing they heard a sound over the fighting. A few seconds later they identified the sounds as those of a Pelican. But this was no ordinary Pelican. It had several rocket pods and a 70-millimeter cannon under the nose. Rockets flashed from the wings and killed several dozen grunts. The cannon opened up and more were killed. Finally, Sgt. Burns noticed the Covenant retreating.

"They're retreating! Advance!" he yelled

Together a dozen marines cried out and ran after the panicking grunts, cutting them down in droves. Two more pelicans landed nearby and disgorged two squads of ODSTs. A moment later, the area was secured. The ODSTs helped the marines refortify their positions and refilled their ammo and grenades. Some marines even took plasma grenades off dead grunts.

* * *

><p>With the addition of half-a-dozen pelicans refitted as gunships the marines and ODSTs held the city, eventually pushing them back and capturing many grunts but only a few Sangheili. Two days later the colony was evacuated just as the Covenant returned with twenty ships.

The human ships managed to escape into slipspace and the Covenant glassed the colony.<p>

It was considered a tactical defeat due to the loss of the colony but a strategic victory because a single cruiser held off two Covenant destroyers.

* * *

><p>Vice Admiral Standford Whitcomb walked into Lord Terrence Hood's office. "Sir, we've received a report from the UNSC Dominion. A recently refitted cruiser sent to Victoria. The ship engaged two Covenant destroyers and defeated them. But not before the enemy landed a large force on the ground. Captain Walker deployed his ODSs to assist the colony while engaged a covenant cruiser that had jumped into the system. Three of our frigates showed up at the same time and they were able to destroy the cruiser. Once orbit was secured, the captain deployed more troops as did the frigates and they managed to hold the colony until it could be evacuated. They went to slipspace on random trajectories as per the Cole Protocol just as the Covenant slipped in and glassed the planet."

"Very good. It might be a tactical defeat but it's a strategic victory. If we can hold them off a little longer we can go on the offensive." replied Hood

* * *

><p>A Brute approached the Hierarchs and bowed on one knee.<p>

"Yes Tartarus? What is it?" asked the Prophet of Truth.

"A Sangheili fleet was defeated over a human colony. By a single cruiser, later reinforced by three frigates."

"Thank you for your report. You may leave." Truth replied.

"Yes Hierarch."

Tartarus left the chambers and the Prophets of Mercy and Regret began arguing.

"The humans now possess shields and plasma weapons. They will soon go on the offensive." said Mercy

"No! They are vermin. They will not cross our borders! The Sangheili will not allow it." replied Regret

"The Sangheili obviously can't wage this war for much longer. Perhaps we should hand it over to the Brutes." Mercy replied

"The fact that the humans now possess technology nearly equal to our own did come as a shock to the Sangheili. I have to wonder how they are managing to manufacture the components they need so fast. Let alone integrate it into their systems." said Truth stopping the argument cold.

"What are you saying Truth?" asked Regret

"I'm saying they must have had help. Even if they captured the

Unwavering Faith and deciphered it's systems. It would still take some time before they could integrate the technology. It would either be some enterprising Jackal, selling components and instructions or..."

"Or what?" asked Mercy

"Or, the _Unwavering Faith_ didn't get captured. The crew might have betrayed us."

"Impossible, the _Unwavering Faith_'s last transmission clearly indicates the ship was captured." replied Mercy.

"It could have been a ruse. They could have faked the death of the shipmaster." said Truth

"The shipmaster was a Sangheili. Are you suggesting that he...defected to the humans?" asked Regret.

"There have been several reports since the beginning of the war of Elites being impressed with the way humans fight. They appreciate courage and valor, something the humans appear to display. We may not be able to trust the Sangheili any longer." said Truth...

7. Skirmish

A/N: I know it's been a while since my last update, things have been a little hectic lately, I'm hoping to get back on the ball soon.

Chapter 7 Skirmish

Apla Aurigae System (six weeks after initial defection)
>Remote Titanium Mining colony<p>

Captain Ellitot Gallagher sat in the command chair of his UNSC destroyer the UNSC MACO. He commanded a small fleet of ten ships on the outskirts of UNSC territory and had orders to defend the small titanium mining colony until reinforcements could come. All of his ships had yet to be refitted with plasma weapons and shielding, but he was confident that he could hold off the Covenant long enough to evacuate the colony. They were scheduled to have an evacuation drill in fifteen minutes but his crew was ahead of schedule and they were ready to conduct the drill. "Get me the colony administrator." he ordered.

Commander Cleveland Jarvis tapped his console and the administrator appeared on a communications channel.

"Administrator Holley, are you prepared to start the evacuation drill?" he asked

"We're ready, the people are lined up. Just give the word-"
>The administrator was interrupted by the sensor officer LtCmdr. Clifton Bond who spoke up as his console pinged.<p>

"Sir! I've got a slipspace signature incoming, profile suggests Covenant ships."

Captain Gallagher responded immediately "Red Alert! Administrator Holley get your people aboard the transports and take as much titanium with you as you can. There are possible Covenant ships inbound to the system."

"We have a spare transport capable of carrying every ounce of titanium we have. We're loading it and the people as fast as we can. This just turned from an evacuation drill to the real thing." he replied

"Very well Mr. Holley. We'll hold them off as long as we can. Mr. Bond, estimate enemy strength and ETA."

"Sir, computer is still cleaning the signal but preliminary estimates put enemy strength at three destroyers and two frigates. ETA ten minutes." Bond replied

"Contact the fleet, have them assume attack formation Delta-2. Launch all fighters. Commander Jarvis, how long did the last evac drill take?"

"Sir, the last drill was timed at seventeen minutes and forty seconds."

"So we have to hold the Covenant off for eight minutes. Let's see if we can arrange a little surprise for them...tactical view on screen." Captain Gallagher said.

A moment later a tactical view of the system appeared on his master display. "Estimated Covenant arrival position?" asked the Captain

LtCmdr. Bond tapped his console again and a small dot appeared not far from the plant.

The Captain sat for a moment, thinking. Then he had a plan. "Move the fleet to the poles. We'll use the magnetic interference to scramble their sensors. Have the Prowler Applebee be in position to deploy HORNET mines. When the Covenant jump in I want them hit on the nose. We have ten ships they have five. I want us in position for a pinpoint slipspace jump. We're gonna jump into the middle of them, hit them hard and then run like hell. Contact the colony, tell them to have the transports make for space via the opposite side of the planet. That should give them some cover to escape into slipspace."

"Yes sir."

"Now we wait."

* * *

><p>Two minutes into the evacuation the first transport lifted off and headed for the opposite side of the planet. The announcement of 'the first transport is away' throughout the spaceport brought cheers as it carried the majority of the families onboard. The next five out of eighteen human cargo ships carrying 600 people plus lifted off six minutes after that. The fleet had hidden itself in the polar regions of the planet, using magnetic interference to block Covenant sensors. As the Covenant were expected to arrive in two more minutes they were

surprised when a Covenant carrier and two destroyers came out of slipspace.<p>

The Covenant ships ran into a perfectly positioned minefield of HORNET nuclear mines that detonated bathing all three ships in nuclear fire. However when the light cleared, the Covenant ships were intact. But they didn't last long as ten MAC rounds fired from positions above and below them slammed into their shields.

Halfway through the evacuation, LCDR Bond had an idea. Rather than jumping into the middle of the fleet and then running for it. The fleet could use the magnetic interference to hide from Covenant sensors while using unmanned drones to relay targeting information back to the fleet. This allowed the fleet to effectively 'snipe' at the ships from a hidden position.

* * *

><p>Shipmaster Gren 'Lodamee, pulled himself off the deck and yelled for a status report. His carrier the Unyielding Conversion had taken several MAC rounds amidships.<p>

"Shipmaster, shields are down to thirty percent. We can't take much more." replied the sensor officer.

"These humans are inventive I'll give them that. Find out where they are and destroy them. Meanwhile launch fighters and have them strafe the colony."

"Yes shipmaster." replied another Sangheili.

"Shipmaster, I believe I know where the enemy ships are." said Tado 'Amasee "They are hiding in the polar regions of the planet. Using the magnetic interference to block our sensors."

"Then how can they target us?" asked the shipmaster.

"I suspect they are using drones or fighters to relay targeting information." 'Amasee replied.

"I see...How are our escorts?"

"The Resplendent Arc has sustained damage to it's shields and has lost a plasma torpedo launcher. The Triumph has less damage and it's shields are regenerating." 'Amasee replied.

"Send them both to the lower polar regions and flush the humans out. We will go high and catch them as they flee." ordered the shipmaster.

"Yes sir."

* * *

><p>LCDR Bond studied his sensor console now clear due to drone relays. "Sir, the Covenant ships are breaking formation. The destroyers are headed to lower regions. The carrier is moving towards us."<p>

"Tell the fleet to standby for precision slipspace jump." replied the

Captain

Although his fleet had yet to receive shields or plasma weapons they did have advanced slipspace sensors which allowed the AIs greater accuracy in slipspace jumps.

"Covenant carrier approaching, range twenty thousand kilometers. They're deploying fighters, heading for the colony. Automatic defenses responding, Longswords moving to intercept." said Bond.

"Plasma torpedoes! Impact in thirty seconds." yelled Jarvis.

"Prepare to jump...jump!" ordered Gallagher

All ten Human ships disappeared from Covenant sensors, then reappeared directly behind them. Another salvo of MAC rounds flashed out as well as hundreds of Archer missiles. Three MAC rounds missed but seven hit their targets. The two destroyers were hit with a pair of medium rounds while the Carrier took two light rounds and a heavy round from the frigates and destroyers. Then the missiles hit, finishing off one of the destroyers and damaging the other. The carrier was crippled, one of the MAC rounds had punched through the engines. The forward section of the carrier was drifting. But before the UNSC fleet could celebrate six CCS-class cruisers dropped out of slipspace. A five plasma torpedoes hit a pair of frigates vaporizing them both.

Captain Gallagher ordered all ships to jump to the opposite end of the planet. "Commander Jarvis, status on the evacuation."

"The last ships are launching now." he replied

"And our fighters?" asked Gallagher.

"Withdrawing, but they've taken heavy casualties. Only about a dozen are left." replied Jarvis

"As soon as they are aboard and the last transports have jumped to slipspace we'll leave as well. Lay in a course for Reach, but jump to a few random places first. We'll need to follow the Cole Protocol." ordered Gallagher.

"Aye sir."

* * *

><p>Shipmaster Roh 'Veryanee stood with his hands clasped behind his back. "The humans fought well and with ingenuity."<p>

"They ran like cowards." replied his second in command.

"On the contrary, their objective was completed by the time we arrived. They could not have defeated us even if they had ten ships. No, this was a tactical retreat, nothing more. I would do the same thing in their position.."

"You would run and dishonor yourself?"

"Let me ask you something. Would you take this ship on it's own against an Assault Carrier?"

"No. It would be foolish."

"Exactly. That's the decision the human commander faced. Retreat, to fight another day, or get yourself and your ships destroyed in a pointless battle. There is no shame in losing to a superior enemy."

"I see your point sir."

"I'm glad. If they weren't considered vermin by the Prophets, the Humans might make good additions to the Covenant..."

* * *

><p>Office of Naval Intelligence Special Agent William Palmer shut down his Chiroptera-class stealth vessel, the Beatrice and sighed. His mission was to make contact with a dissident movement within Sangheili culture. The movement was considered a minor nuisance by the Prophets, but it was quickly gaining support among Sangheili civilians. What few there are. Palmer thought.<p>

And so he waited in a obscure Covenant system, a minor colony really, with little in the way of defenses. He was to rendezvous with a broken-down freighter and make contact with the movements leader. He would then reach an agreement to assist the movement in gaining more power. Enough to influence the Sangheili Council into publicly disagreeing with the war. Although if they did, they would probably be signing their death warrants.

His sensor console beeped at him, jolting him out of his reverie. A Covenant ship just dropped into normal space not far from his position. Another console pinged, it was the comm system. He pushed a button and opened a comm channel.

"Human, you did come." said a surprised Sangheili voice.

"Yes, I did. I bring weapons and supplies. Enough for a small group of insurrectionists."

"Very well. Make ready to dock."

"Understood."

His ship flew into the small hanger of the freighter and set down on the deck gently. The ramp lowered and he stepped out. A small group of Sangheili stood before him. One was dressed in gold armor but had a different symbol on it. Palmer assumed he was the leader of the group.

"Human, I am Fleetmaster Gurho 'Rithinee. Leader of the Sangheili Separatist Alliance."

He nodded, "I am William Palmer, Special Agent of the Office of Naval Intelligence, and former ODST."

"A spy and warrior...impressive." replied Rithinee.

"Indeed. I am here to establish a point of contact between the human race and your dissident group. Sooner or later, we will be able to push the Covenant out of our territory. When we do, we'll go on the offensive. When that happens, we'll need all the help we can get. If your group can become more than a nuisance to the Prophets, it'll distract them, possibly drawing forces away from key targets."

"I see. and in return you would provide weapons and supplies to continue our insurrection."

"Correct...I am also authorized to tell you what really happened to the Unwavering Faith."

"I don't understand, didn't you capture it? I saw the transmission, we all saw it."

"No, the ship was led by a shipmaster by the name of Baras 'Jhanakee."

"Jhanakee!?" exclaimed the Fleetmaster.
>"You know him?"<p>

"Yes, quite well actually. His house and mine have been allies for centuries, even before the Covenant... are you saying he didn't actually die?"

"No. He and his crew defected to our side in what we call the Emerald Cove system. It was there that we not only held off a Covenant attack with minimal losses but also faked his death."

"By the Forerunners...why did he defect?" asked Rithinee

"He stated that he had grown uncomfortable with the war. He was present at the glassings of several human colonies but always managed to get out of it. He believes the Prophets are lying to the Sangheili people. The Prophets tell them that humans are nothing but vermin and that they will have a quick a decisive victory. But in every engagement, the casualties mounted higher and higher. In addition he and several other Elites expressed surprise at the bravery and courage displayed by human troops." replied Palmer.

"Indeed, I have seen many such acts of bravery myself. We welcome your help human, if we can expose the Prophet's lies then my race will surely rise up against them."

"Let's get, started. The first thing we should do is establish a communications code. In the human military we sometimes use a challenge and response system to verify and ship or a person's authorization. For example, the challenge could be anything from a single word to a phrase. The same for the response."

"I see we have much to learn from you." replied the Fleetmaster.

8. Battle of K7-49

Chapter 8

Turning point of the war

It been three months since the initial defection. In a stunning turn of events UNSC forces have

managed to hold of the Covenant at not one but three separate star system. Many ships in the fleet have been upgraded with shields at the very least. Factories at Reach, Earth and a dozen other locations are pumping out the needed components. Plasma weapons take much longer to install and thus are not as common. Marines and ODSTs now have personal shields on par with that of Sangheili minors and majors. The MJOLNIR project was given a boost in technology and funding. Instead of repurposed Jackal shielding, MJOLNIR MK V armor now boosts full Sangheili style shields with the same strength as those worn by Fieldmasters or Shipmasters. With the Covenant invasion now halted, UNSC can now consider going on the offensive. Intelligence taken from the data bank of the Unwavering Faith indicated a shipyard and refinery at a system known as Pegasi Delta, the facility itself was known as K7-49, it was located near the border of the Covenant Empire and thus a key facility for the Covenant's invasion into Human territory.

Admiral Carl 'Buster' Patterson, led the fleet assigned to destroy it. His fleet was heavily armed and every one of them had shields. His fleet consisted of eight battlegroups centered around eight cruisers. Four Marathon-class and Four Halcyon-class. His flagship, the carrier Kittyhawk had been recently refitted not only with shields but hanger bay forcefields. The same kind used on Covenant ships. It was estimated that the system would reduce time unloading supplies as well as launching fighters and assault craft. It carries twelve squadrons of Longsword-IIs outfitted with shields as well as a single squadron of modified Sabres. The new Sabres feature anti-gravity engines and three landing struts, they are also among the first fighters to receive shielding.

The eight battlegroups themselves were made up of several smaller groups of destroyers and frigates. One battlegroup, revolving around the Halcyon-class cruiser Pillar of Autumn included the fleet's troop ships. A pair of refitted Phoenix-class colony ships, like the lost Spirit of Fire. They each carried a battalion of regular marines in addition to a full company of ODSTs. They also carried the majority of ground vehicles to be deployed.

The plan was for all the battlegroups except the planetary assault group to engage the Covenant ships and stations at the shipyard, while the assault group landed its troops. The Prowler Razor's Edge was already in the system seeding the shipyard with HORNET nuclear mines. They would be set to detonate when the fleet arrived, hopefully sending them off balance and delaying reaction time. Also according to intelligence obtained from the Sangheili dissident movement the facility itself was mostly crewed by Brutes. The ships themselves were under Sangheili command.

In all his fleet numbered in the hundreds, with the opposing Covenant forces nearly equal in number. But not in strength. Patterson thought to himself. Most of the ships being built there are smaller frigates and corvettes. With only a few cruisers and destroyers to provide security.

The UNSC fleet dropped out of slipspace in perfect formation and began charging weapons immediately.

Admiral Patterson stepped onto the bridge of his ship. "Report." He ordered

"Sir, the fleet has dropped out of slipspace. We're in perfect formation. Covenant forces are on an intercept course, five cruisers and three destroyers. Replied a LT. at the sensor station.

"Very well. Charge MAC cannons and plasma guns. All ships lock on to active vessels only. Assault group, begin ground assault."

The assault battlegroup broke off from the fleet and headed directly for the planet below. The Covenant ships changed course to intercept but the rest of the UNSC fleet got between the assault group and the Covenant. All eight leading cruisers locked on to the Covenant ships approaching and fired their MAC cannons. Eight lightning bolts flashed through space and impacted the shields of the opposing ships. One destroyer was disabled the other seven ships had depleted shields. Three frigates from each battlegroup fired at the remaining ships knocking them down for good.

The two Phoenix-class transports began dropping troops by the hundred. First a company-sized element of ODSTs secured a dropzone. Then they landed two full battalions three miles from the refinery. ODST snipers were already in position to take down the sentries. The Colonel in charge of the ground operation radioed the snipers and they all fired at the same time, taking down a dozen sentries. Then the two battalions of marines began to cross the large field ahead. It was a full armored assault with a company of Scorpion tanks and at least three dozen Cougar infantry fighting vehicles. Those vehicles surged ahead of the tanks stopping just outside the refinery itself. The ramps dropped and a company of marines trotted out and took up position near a door.

The complex was massive and the doors made of capital-ship grade metal alloy. Conventional infantry explosives weren't going to be enough so the marines backed off and three Scorpions targeted the door with high-velocity sabot rounds. The anti-armor rounds punched through the door created a huge hole. The marines surged inside to meet heavy resistance.

Back on the flagship Admiral Patterson received a report from the Prowler Razor's Edge. They had finished planting HORNET mines on the shipyard's superstructure. He turned to the communications officer. "Lieutenant, the mines are ready, send the detonation codes."

"Yes sir."

The majority of the fleet was still engaged with the active ships. The Covenant fleet was dwindling but still causing damage to the UNSC fleet, so they were caught completely off guard when the shipyard behind them exploded. The shipyard's reactors went critical and exploded.

"All ships, emergency slipspace jump!" yelled Patterson.

All UNSC ships that could jumped to slipspace, their fighters were in formation and made the jump as well. Ships that couldn't jump made a break for open space. The shockwave incinerated the remaining

Covenant ships but mostly dissipated before it hit the planet. A few UNSC ships were caught in the wave and destroyed, others were tossed about. Admiral Patterson's fleet jumped back in and recovered the Marines on the ground. Then jumped back to UNSC territory.

The entire fleet was given a 'unit commendation' medal. The people celebrated their victory and recruitment skyrocketed. Very soon the UNSC was going to have more soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines than it knew what to do with...

9. The Covenant Splits

Chapter 9 The Covenant Splits

The war took a big turn after the UNSC's decisive victory at K7-49. The Sangheili dissident movement grew in both numbers and strength. They've launched raids against Brute ships and other Covenant strongholds. They've also raided supply depots where spare parts for critical systems are stored. They even managed to capture a freighter full of Covenant slipspace drives. With this influx of parts and components, the UNSC has stepped up its refit program. Nearly every heavy ship in the fleet has been retrofitted with shields and about half of the cruisers have at least one plasma beam weapon. The beam weapon was found to be far more efficient than the slower torpedoes. Scientists have even developed a countermeasure for the magnetic guidance systems of the torpedoes. It didn't work 100% of the time and required the MAC gun to be powered down or not charged, but it would give at least the smaller ships that have yet to be refitted with shields a chance at survival.

Meanwhile in the Covenant Empire things were getting...interesting...The Prophets made the decision to change the honor guard from Sangheili to Brutes. The Sangheili were upset...but not as much as they should have been. The truth behind the Unwavering Faith's capture was revealed by the UNSC in a powerful transmission aimed directly at Covenant space. A second and third defection of an entire Sangheili CCS-class battlecruiser soon followed and shook the Covenant to its foundation. But it was during the battle of the Heian system over a Covenant logistics base that the war and the Covenant changed forever...

* * *

><p>"Report!" yelled Captain Richard Sterling of the UNSC destroyer
Defiant.

His ship had taken heavy damage in the battle so far but it was still kicking. The rest of the human fleet had sustained moderate damage to all ships. His XO, Commander Jacob Keyes responded.

"Sir, shields are down to fifty percent. We've nearly depleted our archer missiles. Sir, the Covenant ships have ceased fire...they're locking on again to..." Keyes paused as he read the display.

"What is it? who have they locked onto?" asked Sterling.

"Each other sir. They're locking on to each other." Keyes replied.

"Really? Could the defection of the _Unwavering Faith_ have anything to do with it?" asked Sterling.

"I can't answer that right now...we're receiving a transmission, general frequency...from a Covenant ship."

"Put it through." said Sterling.

"_Brothers of the Covenant! Lend me your strength so that we may vanquish our enemies. The Sangheili have betrayed their oath of loyalty to the Covenant by allying themselves with the human filth. Even now our glorious forces are eliminating every Sangheili they find. For the Great Journey and the Covenant!"_ said the Brute.

"Sir...signal from the Flagship." said Keyes.

"_All ships, this is Admiral Patterson. I've just reached an agreement with the Sangheili Fleet Commander. He has sent us their transponder codes and I've sent him ours. You are ordered to tag those ships...as friendly. The Brutes are the enemy now. I say again target Brute ships only. Be advised, some ships have mixed crews, they are to be marked as neutral until they open fire on one side or the other."_

"Acknowledge the orders Commander. Target the closest Brute ship and open fire." said Sterling.

"Aye sir. MAC gun charging...firing in thirty seconds." he replied

Two hundred additional MAC guns charged and fired at the Brute fleet. The Sangheili ships broke formation with their former allies and joined the human fleet. With the combined power of the UNSC and Sangheili ships they were able to eliminate all the Brute controlled ships. The ships with mixed crews were still idle, the crews were fighting amongst themselves. With Patterson's permission the Sangheili ships boarded the ships with mixed crew and assisted the Sangheili already there with taking the ship. An additional twenty ships were captured. The Sangheili Fleetmaster contacted Admiral Patterson once the space battle had concluded.

"_We know the logistics base was your primary target and it would be simple to eliminate from orbit. But there are over a thousand Sangheili assigned to the base, not doubt they are fighting for their lives at this moment. I must retrieve them."_

"Very well. Let us know if you need any assistance."

"_You have my thanks Admiral."_

The Sangheili Flagship took position over the base and dropped Elite troops in the Covenant version of an HEV pod. The Elite troops attacked the base and rescued hundreds of Elites. But there were still many more Elites trapped in the interior of the base. Brute anti-aircraft fire shot down dozens of phantoms and the Elites didn't have the troops to spare to take them out. So the Fleetmaster contacted Admiral Patterson and requested help.

* * *

><p>"Admiral, the Sangheili Fleetmaster wants to speak with you."
said the Ensign and communications.<p>

"Put him through." replied the Admiral.

"_Admiral, my forces are spread thin through the base attempting to rescue the remaining Sangheili. But there are Brutes controlling anti-aircraft guns and they are shooting down my evacuation ships. I must request your assistance in taking them out." _said the Fleetmaster

"Not a problem. Tell your men, help is on the way." replied Patterson

* * *

><p>"Alright Helljumpers, here's the situation. The Elites are trying to evacuate their base but the Brutes are putting up a fight by shooting down their evacuation ships. Our orders are to destroy the AA guns and assist the Elites with anything else they need." said Gunnery Sergeant Frederick Kirk. "I know how some of you feel about helping the Elites. But you have to understand, they were being lied to and now they're in the same position we were in. No matter what that species might have done to us we won't sink to the Covenant's level and effectively commit genocide against them in response." he continued. "I expect nothing less than the best from you. Now mount up!"<p>

The platoon of ODS'Ts scrambled and secured themselves in their HEV pods. The gunny came over the comm once again. "_Troopers! Our drop point is approximately a klick outside the base. _ We're making contact with a group of Elite guides who will get us to the AA guns. Prepare to drop!"

* * *

><p>Sgt. Paul Jackson gripped the controls for his pod. A countdown appeared on a screen in front of him. 3...2...1. Jackson felt weightlessness as the pod dropped from orbit. He used his basic radar to keep in formation with the other troopers. His pod landed with a thud, the cover popped open and he rushed out. The area was clear so he moved up in front of the others and took cover behind a large formation of rocks. Jackson leaned around the lefthand side...and ducked back as he was greeted by plasma rifle fire...Red plasma rifle fire. "Brutes!" he yelled as he leaned back around and put out a burst of fire. A short burst hit a minor causing his shields to flare. Jackson put another few bursts into the brute and it went down. He saw another group of Brutes approaching from the left. "On the left flank!" he yelled. A dozen troopers turned and gunned all four Brutes down. "Where are those Elites?!" he yelled.

The answer to his question came in the form of a phantom dropship that hovered over the helljumpers and used it's underslung plasma cannon to clear the area. Then six elites, one in the golden armor of a fieldmaster dropped via the gravitylift.

While Gunnery Sergeant Kirk cautiously approached the Elites, his troops stood by ready for anything. Kirk lowered his weapon as he

approached, the Elites responded by doing the same. "I am Gunnery Sergeant Frederick Kirk."

The gold Elite bowed in respect. "Fieldmaster Huki 'Mortumee." the Elite replied.

"My orders...are to destroy the AA guns preventing you from evacuating the remaining Elites in the base." said Kirk

"Understood. The AA guns are this way."

* * *

><p>The Fieldmaster led the marines to a small valley where the Brute AA guns were established. The Gunny had looked through binoculars and had scouts recon the other side. A few minutes later he drew a crude map in the dirt.<p>

"The valley is here. The AA guns are here." Kirk said scratching out two lines and a circle. "If we station snipers here, here and here. It should confuse them and make them think they're under attack from all sides. That should keep them distracted. If our snipers can get shots at the Chieftains first, it'll make our job even easier." said the Gunny as he put smaller holes on three sides of the valley.

The Fieldmaster nodded in approval. _Even the human minors are well trained. _He thought to himself. _They make worthy opponents and even better allies._ "A well conceived plan. My Elites will support you in your attack."

The Gunny nodded. "Fall out marines! Abrams, Galindo, Tackett! Take your teams and flank the valley. Set up snipers on the left and right and behind them."

"Yes Gunnery Sergeant!" they replied in unison.

* * *

><p>Within thirty minutes the ODSTs were in position. Gunny Kirk called out to his sniper positions and had them sound off. "Sniper teams...sound off." he said<p>

"One ready." came as a whisper

"Two ready."

_"Three ready." _

Then Jackson turned to the gunny. "All snipers in position." he said

"Very well. All snipers, target Chieftains, open fire." he said

Three synchronized sniper shots flashed out and three of five Chieftains fell with holes punched through them. Well a battle cry that made even the Elites pause, the marines rose from their positions and charged the Brute encampment.

Jackson sprinted forward only to skid to a halt as a massive Brute

major came out from behind a rock. Jackson snapped up his SMG and put a full magazine into the beast. It fell with a wet thud. Jackson moved on and quickly came to one of the AA guns. He and four other ODS'Ts cleared the area while one of the six Elites planted a plasma explosive. The Elite signaled for the marines to evac the immediate area and set off the charges. Jackson and his squad moved up as friendly sniper fire continued to ring out taking down the last two Chieftains and another Major.

Up ahead was a squad of marines in a fierce firefight with half a dozen brutes, three of which were Majors. The fire was so intense none of the marines could get a shot off. So Jackson signaled the Elite that had attached himself to his squad and asked "Do you have active camouflage?"

"Yes." the Elite answered. His respect for the humans had jumped several notches in the last few minutes.

"Lets get around behind those Brutes and toss a few grenades on them. That should take some pressure off our boys." replied the Sergeant.

The Elite nodded and led a small team around the six Brutes and came up behind them. On the comm, Jackson pinged the Corporal in charge. "Squad leader, on my mark cease fire...mark."

At once the squad of marines ducked and stopped firing. The Brutes, momentarily confused didn't notice the smaller squad of men sneaking up behind them and tossing plasma grenades on three of them. All six Brutes went up in a blaze, half of them vaporized. Jackson and the Corporal joined forces and joined the rest of the platoon in destroying the AA guns. When the last one exploded, Kirk radioed Command. "Command, this is Bravo two-five, AA guns neutralized. Request pickup or new instructions."

"_Roger, two-five. Excellent work. The Elites have rallied their troops and evacuated them successfully. You bought them just enough time. Pickup is on its way, hold position."_

"Roger command." said Kirk. "Marines! pickup is on the way, secure the area." he yelled.

The marines quickly moved out and created a perimeter for the Pelicans to land. The Fieldmaster joined the gunny as they walked along. "Your men fought with honor."

"Thanks...your men did good themselves. I look forward to working with your people in the future." replied the Gunny.

"With fortune you will have many opportunities."

The Pelicans soon arrived and took recovered the ODS'Ts. Once everyone was evacuated a Shiva nuclear missile impacted the base and vaporized it.

10. Humanitarian Aid

Chapter 10

Once it became clear that the Sangheili were in danger of being eradicated, several of their colonies were evacuated and sent to their homeworld in the Ur system. However, several outlying colonies could not get home because the Brutes and Covenant Loyalists had set up a blockade to prevent any more Sangheili reinforcements or civilians from entering their system. These ships were redirected at the behest of the UNSC. A Sangheili refugee camp was established on the Outer Colony world of Coral. As refugees began to flood the camp and planet, the human population began to protest. In response the UNSC recommended to the Sangheili civilians that they stay within the campgrounds. They also sent SSGT Scott and Shipmaster Jhanakee to speak on behalf of the refugees.

On Reach where the crew of the Unwavering Faith was being held, SSGT. Scott met with Shipmaster Jhanakee to discuss the situation brewing on Coral.

"Are you ready to leave Shipmaster?" asked Scott.

"Yes. I am. I've been going over the reports of the 'refugee' camp as you put it. I will provide the necessary information to organize them and reunite them with family." he replied

"Since this is a non-combat deployment I've been allowed to bring my family along." waving a hand behind him. "I'd like to introduce my wife Elizabeth. My son Adam and my daughter Ellen."

The Sangheili shipmaster put a fist over his heart and bowed his head slightly. "I am honored to meet the mate and children of a worthy opponent."

Elizabeth wasn't sure what to say other than "Umm...thanks."

SSGT. Scott smiled. "Let's go. The transport is leaving in an hour."

* * *

><p>A week later a UNSC cruiser dropped out of slipspace near Coral. On the bridge they could see the steadily growing number of Human and Sangheili ships, several of which were transports carrying refugees. SSGT. Scott, his family and Shipmaster Jhanakee boarded a Pelican dropship which landed at the local Marine base near the refugee center. They were directed to base housing where SSGT Scott dropped off his family, then he and the Shipmaster continued on to the base commander's office.<p>

General George E. Sterling sat in his office as the two soldiers arrived. SSGT Scott entered, stood at attention and saluted. He held that salute as Shipmaster Jhanakee stepped in beside him. The Elite officer stood with his hand over his heart in a fist, the Sangheili version of a salute. "Sir, Staff Sergeant Scott and Shipmaster Jhanakee reporting as ordered sir." said Scott.

The General looked up and returned Scott's salute then nodded to the shipmaster and said "At ease." He stood. "Shipmaster, you have my thanks for returning our marine and the technology you brought us. Your defection has definitely changed the course of the war." Then he held out his hand.

The Shipmaster was surprised by the General's attitude he expected an officer who didn't really like the Covenant in general and the Sangheili in particular. Hesitantly, he shook the General's hand...and found that the General had respectable strength for what he understood to be an aged human male. "You are welcome General."

"Now, Staff Sergeant, I want you to meet with the Governor of the colony, then give a press conference. Shipmaster, I need you to go to the refugee center and get some things straightened out. As I understand it there have been some families separated and you have the knowledge and understanding of Sangheili culture to organize and reunite the families here."

Both men replied "Yes General."

"Welcome to Coral Colony. Dismissed." said the General.

* * *

><p>It took several weeks to get all the refugees sorted out and families reunited but Jhanakee and Scott proved to be effective in organizing the camp. For the first few days they also had to deal with protesters outside the camp. But that was quickly silenced when Scott's little girl fearlessly walked up to the Sangheili Fleetmaster gave him a hug and said 'thank you for bringing home my daddy'. Many were moved to tears. The protests quickly ceased and instead of rejecting the refugees many began to interact and make them feel at home in their temporary placement.<p>

Two weeks later, Scott and Jhanakee were sitting behind a table working with some Sangheili to find their families when a Marine officer approached them. "Fleet Master, Gunnery Sergeant Scott, the General requests your presence in his office. There is a vehicle waiting to take you there." he said

The Sangheili officer and Marine both nodded stood and made their way to a warthog parked outside the refugee center. The Marine in the driver's seat stared for a second at Jhanakee before putting the vehicle in gear. It was a short drive to the base and then to the General's office. Scott and Jhanakee both entered the office and stood at attention before the General. The General returned Scott's salute and nodded to Jhanakee. "Fleet Master, I've just received word of a small group of Sangheili warships arriving in orbit. They brought word of a Brute attack and blockade of the Sangheili home planet. From what we've been told the planet relied on trade with other covenant worlds to provide food and other goods. With a Brute blockade in place it's only a matter of time before the Elites begin to starve to death. HighCom, has authorized a joint operation with the Sangheili resistance to break the blockade and bring relief supplies to the planet. I want you to go with them and see that the Alliance works out. There still a bit of anti-Sangheili sentiment among the fleet. HighCom, as well as myself is hoping that a joint operation will stamp out the last of it. Your transport leaves for Reach in an hour, dismissed." the General said.

* * *

><p>An hour later their 'transport' a modified UNSC Frigate, made a slipspace jump to Reach. Three days later the frigate arrived at

Reach. Scott looked out a nearby viewport with Jhanakee. "My goodness...look at all those ships!" he said.<p>

Through the viewport Scott could see hundreds of ships and dozens of yards pumping out ships at an alarming pace. Not only were there UNSC ships but several dozen Sangheili ships parked in high orbit near an orbital defense platform. No sooner did the Gunny see those ships than the Captain of the frigate came over the PA system. _"Gunnery Sergeant Scott, Fleet Master Jhanakee, report to Pelican hanger."_

"Guess that's our bird Fleet Master we better get going." said Scott.

"Indeed." replied Jhanakee.

11. The Battle of Sanghellios

Chapter 11 The Battle of Sanghelios

Shipmaster Janakee and SSGT. Scott boarded the flagship of Admiral Patterson's fleet, the carrier UNSC _Kittyhawk_. Now fully re-equipped with plasma weapons and shields the _Kittyhawk_ can go toe to toe with equivalent Covenant ships. The Shipmaster and SSGT. were both led to the bridge where Admiral Patterson was waiting for them.

"Shipmaster, good to have you aboard, you'll be coordinating the Sangheili element of the fleet. Our job is to break the blockade so relief ships can land on the surface. Then we deal with the rest of the Brute ships in orbit." said the Admiral

"Very well Admiral. I will board one of our ships and take command." replied Janakee

A Lieutenant in communications walked up to the Admiral with a pad in his hand. "Sir, priority message from Highcom."

"Thank you Lieutenant." replied the Admiral as he read the message. "The Brutes have begun landing troops on Sanghelios. We need to leave immediately. Captain, signal the fleet to disembark all non-essential personnel. Ready the slipspace drive. Set coordinates for Sanghelios. Don't worry Shipmaster, we'll get there in plenty of time b stop a slaughter. I do suggest you pick your flagship and take command of it immediately though."

"At once Admiral." replied Janakee, saluting with a fist over his hearts. The Admiral nodded and the Elite left. SSGT. Scott stood at ease waiting for his orders.

"SSGT, I want you to get aboard one of the supply ships I want you to coordinate the relief effort once we've secured the system. I know you want to go back onto active duty but you just got back from five years as a POW. Give it some time and you'll be back where you belong."

"Yes sir." replied Scott.

Thirty minutes later all ships in the fleet were in position for a

slipspace jump. All one hundred and fifty UNSC ships and another two hundred Sangheili ships jumped into slipspace on course for Sanghelios.

It took twelve hours for the fleet to arrive at Sanghelios. The battle had begun twenty-four hours earlier and was still raging. There were hundreds of Brute and Sangheili ships in the system all firing at each other. Admiral Patterson contacted Janakee to discuss it.

"This is a problem, we can't tell who is who. We need to get the transponder codes for your ships so we can identify them as friendly." Patterson told Janakee.

"I will contact the Fleet master. Standby." replied Janakee.

Newly Promoted Fleet master R'tas 'Vadum was bewildered at everything. First the Brutes arrive and start shooting at everything. Then humans show up with more Sangheili ships. All he could focus on was the defense of the homeworld, which wasn't going well. Several battalions of Brutes had already landed on Sangheili soil. His attention was diverted when a Sangheili ship in formation with the humans hailed his ship. It was Janakee, or rather Janak.

"Fleet master, we are here to assist but the humans require your transponder codes in order to identify the enemy. Right now they can't tell the difference and would do more harm than good."

"Very well, I'll transmit the codes." He replied then nodded to an Elite Minor manning communications.

The codes were transmitted and within minutes the human fleet engaged the Brutes. With the Brutes so intent on eliminating the Elites that they didn't notice the humans until they were hit on the flank, losing several ships in the process.

"Launch all fighters." ordered Patterson. "All ships, break formation and engage by taskforce."

Another salvo of MAC rounds fired, ripping into the shields of the Brute ships, while hundreds of refitted Longswords joined their Sangheili allies. A few minutes later another salvo was fired this time destroying several CCS-class cruisers and one Assault Carrier. Two more Assault Carriers sustained moderate damage before the Shadow of Intent dropped out of slipspace and finished them off.

Thel Vadam stood on the command deck of his flagship satisfied at the kill. "Tag the human ships as friendly. Continue firing on all Brute ships." he said as his ship and another three dozen former Covenant ships opened fire.

The Brute ships while tough could not deal with both plasma and projectile weapons at the same time. The enemy fleet was quickly routed and withdrew from the system.

A lieutenant handed Admiral Patterson a casualty report. He nodded in approval as he read it. "Not bad, minimal ship losses and moderate fighter losses." He turned to the communications officer. "Get me Fleet master R'tas." he ordered

A moment later the officer nodded. "Channel open sir."

"_Admiral we owe you a debt of gratitude for helping defend our world._" said R'tas.

Patterson nodded "Fleet master, our sensors are detecting several thousand Brutes still on the surface. Do you require our assistance for that as well?"

The Fleet master nodded. "Most of the warriors here are either retired or still training. We welcome your help."

Thel Vadam also contacted both commanders. _"Admiral, Fleet master, my ships have a great number of veteran warriors, they stand ready to assist."_

"Very well, Fleet master, we'll let your people take point on this, it is your planet after all."

"Thank you Admiral."

A/N: Sorry about the long update, I'm attempting to get back into writing but work and planning a wedding is taking time.

End
file.